

TESTIMONY OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Judiciary Committee

Opposing:

*[S.B. No. 365](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS

*[H.B. No. 5417](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE JUSTICE AND SERVICES AND FIREARMS BACKGROUND CHECKS

*[H.B. No. 5418](#) (RAISED) AN ACT REVISING JUVENILE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE STATUTES AND INSURANCE STATUTES CONCERNING THEFT OF A MOTOR VEHICLE

*[S.B. No. 386](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF THE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY LAWS OF THIS STATE

Supporting:

*[S.B. No. 387](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

March 13, 2022

Dear Chairs Senator Winfield and Representative Stafstrom:

My name is Kimberly Escarsega and I am a Waterbury citizen expressing my strong opposition for SB 365, HB 5417, HB 5418, and SB 386. In these sections there are many recommendations that are ineffective, is already being done in legislative bodies, or increase barriers and impact primarily families of color including:

- Electronic monitoring in certain circumstances
- The expansion of provisions imposing upon a child special juvenile probation in the case of murder or first degree manslaughter
- Amending various juvenile and criminal justice statutes to provide for (A) next day summons for certain alleged offenses, and appearances for all juveniles in the geographical area court in which the alleged offense occurred, (C) increase flexibility when determining whether to detain a child, (E) allow for global positioning monitoring of juveniles under certain circumstances, (F) allow for automatic transfer to regular criminal docket for thirteen and fourteen-year-olds if charged with certain violent crimes, (G) establish a committee to evaluate the criminal justice system for juveniles and adults

and eliminate the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee, (H) exclude certain crimes from automatic erasure provisions, and (I) establish a distinct crime for motor vehicle theft

- Allow for automatic transfer to regular criminal docket for fourteen or thirteen year olds if charged with certain violent crimes

The recommended changes and new policies listed above are bad policy recommendations that will only create more adversities for children and families, specifically those in under-resourced, diverse communities. Instead of focusing on incarcerating our way out of problems, we need to focus on addressing the root causes that are leading young people into the legal system. We have young people making irrational decisions that are rooted in issues such as housing insecurity, lack of positive representation in their network, economic instability, 2-year long pandemic that resulted in lack of education, gaps in social services and learning, and loss of basic life necessities, and nonetheless regular child development. We can not take the issues that have happened throughout the course of the pandemic and let that influence policy that will impact more than just the small group of kids that are engaging in “criminal activity”. We have to do better at making sure we are creating solutions that aim to rehabilitate and help grow children, instead of pushing them deeper into the system and isolating them from ever being successful.

I’d like to express my support for SB 387. Although the bill would be best if it was in its original, strongest form, SB 387 speaks to the years, and intensive ongoing work of the JJPOC. The JJPOC is composed of experts from all fields related to juvenile justice including state agencies, youth and parents that are directly impacted, educators, providers, advocates, and more. The JJPOC bill has recommendations that were created with all perspectives taken into consideration and goes through a thorough workgroup process annually that results in annual recommendations. SB 387 is composed of important recommendations that move the needle closer to solution-based ways to address youth crime and ultimately divert youth from the legal system. HB 5418 recommends eliminating the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee which means eliminating one of the state’s only inclusive appointed legislative bodies, undoing years of progress toward creating more successful ways to address youth justice alongside those impacted the most by the legal system.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony as I navigate regular day-to-day responsibilities. Feel free to reach out to the CT Justice Alliance to reach me or have more conversations about these issues.

Kimberly Escarsega